

All Are Welcome

As we prepared to receive communion last week, the Pastor said as he always does, "In the United Methodist Church all are welcome at the table. It doesn't matter if you are a member of this church, or any church, communion is open to all." I like that about our church! New to faith, or long-time believer, you are welcome. We all have had that moment when we walked into a church and felt like this could be the church where we found salvation, peace, knowledge, friends in faith, belonging, purpose, mission, strength to change our lives, forgiveness, renewal of our faith, and whatever we were seeking. I did it at 15 because I wanted to know about a God that would take my brother that I adored, and He would leave me alone. Many of my friends have been believers all their life, some were seekers later in life for whatever reason. They are all welcome at the table. I am proud to be a member of a place that means so much to so many. In my lifetime things have changed in churches, membership is not what it once was. When I was young (that phrase is the phrase of the elderly and I embrace it) Sunday was church day. We never went but it was the day the stores were closed, movies still ran but started in the afternoon, there was no shopping, and it was family time starting in the morning with church. Some churches had morning and evening services. It was a "God centered nation." When I started going to church, within a brief time my family joined me. They returned to the denomination of their youth. I did not know my parents had both been raised in the Methodist Church until later. They never mentioned that they had a foundation that began in infancy. I didn't learn this until they were older. Their children, me included, were baptized in the Methodist Church, my brother's funeral was led by a Methodist Pastor. I never asked my parents why they stopped going to church but I think I know, and it was their story to tell, not mine. I do know that for the rest of their days they never missed church without good reason. My Father did show me the Methodist Church that he attended as a youth in Allenton, Michigan, and the cemetery next door where his grandfather and others were buried. My Mother told me of an uncle in Pennsylvania that was a founding member of the Methodist church in his town. That first Sunday I decided to go to church dressed in my clothes I had made in Home Economics in High School; I passed 2 other churches but knew I belonged at the Methodist Church because I was baptized in a Methodist Church. I was welcomed to the church, to membership, to service, and to Communion.

Matthew 16:15-18 But what about you? Who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus replied, "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and, on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.

Lord, we thank you for this day and for our blessings. Lord, we ask that you be with our church, may it be your church in all things. May we respond when we see need in others. Be with our Pastor bless him in his life and in his work and bless his family. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve, may we seek to comfort them. Be with our staff and leaders, guide and lead them. May we be the hands and feet of Jesus the Christ in this time and in this place. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson